Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANAGU 04672 031930Z

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

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NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 /053 W
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O R 031815Z DEC 74
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5656
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 4672

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, NU
SUBJECT: SOMOZA'S NEW TEAM

REF: MANAGUA 4650

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT SOMOZA'S CABINET INCLUDES FOUR NEW MINISTERS WITH STRONG TECHNICAL/ADMINISTRATIVE BACKGROUNDS. GENERALLY SPEAKING, THE HOLDOVERS ARE PROVEN ASSETS, AND OVERALL THE NEW CABINET SPPEARS TO BE SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT OVER THE PREVIOUS ONE. END SUMMARY.

1. NEW CABINET NAMED BY PRESIDENT SOMOZA NOVEMBER 30 RETAINS MOST OF KEY FIGURES FROM PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT, BUT ASSIGNS FOUR PORTFOLIOS TO NEW, RELATIVELY YOUNG OFFICIALS WHO ARE TECHNICIANS AND/OR PROVEN ADMINISTRATORS. MINISTERS OF HEALTH (CAJINA) AND AGRICULTURE (SENGLEMAN) BOTH RECEIVED DEGREES FROM U.S. UNIVERSITIES, AND HAVE CONSIDERABLE PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE IN THE AREAS THEY WILL ADMINISTER. PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER (GONZALEZ),
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PAGE 02 MANAGU 04672 031930Z

A NATIONAL GUARD COLONEL, HAS WORKED MANY YEARS IN THE MINISTRY,

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

DID OUTSTANDING JOB AS CHIEF OF NATIONAL HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT, AND WAS TRAINED AS A CIVIL ENGINEER IN BRAZIL. NEW LABOR MINISTER (CARDOZE-, ALTHOUGH HE HAS NO LABOR BACKGROUND, IMPRESSED US AS EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATOR WHILE SERVING AS GON COORDINATOR FOR AID PROGRAM LOAN.

2. AS FOR HOLDOVERS, THREE OF THEM WERE CLEARLY IMPORTANT ASSETS TO SOMOZA IN OUTGOING CABINET. GENERAL MONTIEL IN FINANCE IS WELL-RESPECTED AND VERY CAPABLE. VALLE OLIVARES IN NATIONAL DISTRICT (DN) IS ONE OF SOMOZA'S MOST TRUSTED LIEUTENANTS AND IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO HAVE DONE A GOOD JOB RUNNING RECONSTRUCTION EFFORT DN PERFORMED IN CAPITAL. MONTIEL ARGUELLO, A CAPABLE INTERNATIONAL JURIST, AS FOREIGN MINISTER HAS LENT PRESTIGE TO THAT OFFICE AND HAS HANDLED HIMSELF WELL IN EXECUTING THE PRESCRIBED FOREIGN POLICY WHICH SOMOZA HIMSELF CAREFULLY DICTATES. OTHER TWO HOLDOVERS IN ECONOMY AND DEFENSE (WHICH HAS ONLY QUASI-MILITARY RESPONSI-BILITIES) ARE NOT EXPECTED TO LAST IN LONG RUN. IN PARTICULAR, MARTINEZ IN ECONOMY, THE LEAST COMPETENT MEMBER OF THE PREVIOUS CABINET, WILL REPORTEDLY BE TRANSFERRED IN NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE TO NEWLY-CREATED CABINET LEVEL POSITION. RICARDO PARRALES, RECALLED AS AMBASSADOR TO LONDON TO BECOME MARTINEZ' VICE-MINISTER, IS EXPECTED TO BE ELEVATED TO MINISTER OF ECONOMY IN JANUARY.

3. APPARENT DEMOTION OF MARIN ABAUNZA TO MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND PROMOTION OF MORA ROSTRAN FROM EDUCATION TO MARIN'S OLD JOB IN MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT WAS ONE OF MORE INTERESTING CHANGES IN CABINET. GOVERNMENT MINISTER ACTS AS ONE OF PRINCIPAL SPOKESMEN FOR GON ON POLITICAL ISSUES, AND MORA, WHO ENJOYS ALMOST UNIVERSAL "NICE-GUY" REPUTATION, COULD GIVE ADMINISTRATION NEW VELVET GLOVE IMAGE WHICH MORE AGGRESSIVE MARIN COULD NEVER HAVE CARRIED OFF. MARIN, WHO ACTIVELY ASPIRED TO BE FOREIGN MINISTER AND CAMPAIGNED AS HARD AS ANYONE FOR SOMOZA, IS UNDOUBTEDLY SENSITIVE TO INTERPRETATION THAT MOVE FROM FIRST RANK CABINET POST TO FOURTH MEANS HE HAS FALLEN FROM FAVOR. PRESUMEDLY AT HIS INITIATIVE, NOVEDADES RUSHED INTO PRINT DAY AFTER CABINET ANNOUNCEMENT WITH ARTICLE EXTOLLING HIS BACKGROUND IN EDUCATION--SEVERAL POSITIONS AS A UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR.

4. OF FOUR MINISTERS DISPLACED, ONLY ONE HAS SO FAR BEEN NAMED TO A NEW POSITION IN THE GON. CRISTOBAL RUGAMA, FORMERLY THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 MANAGU 04672 031930Z

LACKLUSTRE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS, WAS MADE HEAD OF THE NICARAGUAN AGRARIAN INSTITUTE. HIS APPOINTMENT WAS ONE OF HANDFUL OF CHANGES MADE IN CHIEFS OF AUTONOMOUS AGENCIES. AMONG THESE TWO WERE RECENTLY RETIRED NATIONAL GUARD OFFICERS: GENERAL ALBERTO MONTEALEGRE TO HEAD DENACAL THE WASTE DISPOSAL INSTITUTE AND COLONEL LEON BERMUDEZ TO THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ELECTRICAL ENERGY. COMBINED WITH APPOINTMENT OF COLONEL GONZALEZ TO PUBLIC WORKS AND RETENTION OF GENRRALS MONTIEL IN FINANCE AND MENDOZA

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

AT TELECOMMUNICATIONS (TELCOR) AND, OF COURSE, COL. SANCHEZ IN DEFENSE, THIS SLIGHTLY RAISES PROFILE OF OFFICIALS WITH MILITARY BACKGROUND IN NEW GOVERNMENT. MAJOR APPOINTMENT FROM PRIVATE SECTOR WAS BUSINESSMAN AND AGRICULTURALIST SENGLEMAN AS AGRICULTURE MINISTER. IN ADDITION, NEW CHIEF OF MANAGUA WATER WORKS IS LUIS PEREIRA DENUEDA, BROTHER OF CHAMBER OF CONSTRUCTION PRESIDENT AND CAPABLE BUSINESSMAN IN HIS OWN RIGHT.

5. MOST SURPRISING VICE-MINISTERIAL APPOINTMENT WAS HARRY BODAN SHIELDS TO FOREIGN MINISTRY. RELATIVELY UNKNOWN AND ONLY THIRTY-FOUR YEARS OLD,BODAN IS SON OF MANAGUA POLICE CHIEF AND WAS CHARGE D'AFFAIRES IN BELGIUM PRIOR TO APPOINTMENT.

6. REFLECTING EMPHASIS PRESIDENT IS EXPECTED TO GIVE ECONOMIC MATTERS IN COMING ADMINISTRATION, CARLOS DUBON, PRINCIPAL ECON-OMIC ADVISOR TO SOMOZA AS PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY COMMITTEE, WAS GIVEN THE KEY CABINET-LEVEL POST OF SECRETARY TO THE PRESIDENCY, DUBON HAS WORKED CLOSELY WITH USAID AND IS HIGHLY REGARDED FOR HIS TECHNICAL COMPETENCE.

7. COMMENT:SOMOZA'S NEW TEAM LOOKS A LOT BETTER TO US THAN IT DOES TO MANY HERE, INCLUDING FERVENT SOMOCISTAS. CRITICISM HAS BEEN VOICED THAT PLUSES AND MINUSES CANCEL EACH OTHER OUT AND THAT IT IS NO REAL IMPROVEMENT. MAJOR PLUS ACKNOWLEDGED TO BE SENGLEMAN IN AGRICULTURE AND MINUS IS MARTINEZ IN ECONOMY. EMB BELIEVES, HOWEVER, THAT DUBON AND CARDOZE, WHO ARE BETTER KNOWNTO US THAN TO MOST NICARAGUAN OBSERVERS, WILL GIVE CLASS TO NEW CABINET. ALSO, WHILE MORA CONSIDERED A POLITICAL LIGHTWEIGHT BY MANY HERE, WE HAVE FOUND HIM TO BE A HARDWORKING, CAPABLE AND INTELLIGENT ADMINISTRATOR, IN ADDITION TO HIS OWNING A LESS POLITICALLY ABRASIVE PERSONALITY THAN HIS PREDECESSOR. AS A RESULT, WE THINK THAT NEW GROUP -- ESPECIALLY IF MARTINEZ IS INDEED A SHORT-TERMER IN HIS PRESENT PORTFOLIO -- IS A SIGNIFI-
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Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

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EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

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